

# AND SUCKERS

An EXPOSE of the  
SPIRITUALISTIC RACKET

by JOSEPH DUNNINGER,  
MASTER MENTALIST  
and READER of  
THOUGHTS



European Photos

By Dipping Their Hands Alternately Into Water and Melted Paraffin, Mediums Mold What They Call "Spirit Hands," One of Which Dunninger Is Exhibiting.

I shied away, too, chair and all. With a triumphant leer, the monster turned and started back toward the cabinet.

On the second hop it tripped and sprawled with a very human shriek, which I followed with the one word, "Lights!"

As it tried to get up, the creature elongated to almost human size. I stretched it further by grabbing a top-knot above its head. As it lost the unusual robe it was wearing, the witnesses saw the most amazing transformation ever accomplished in any seance room.

The thing from Mars had become Marxa. Her disguise was simple, but remarkably effective when seen in the red light. She had taken the cabinet's inner curtain, the one with the elastic cords, and drawn it about her.

Squatting inside, she had appeared really hideous. With her shoulders doubled down to her knees, she had reduced her height.

Marxa was an acrobat as well as a contortionist, and her spy hops around the floor had resembled the steps of a Russian dance.

The saffron face with its slant eyes and flat nose had been produced by one of her stockings, drawn over her head. The silk had thinned into a yellow film, and the tightened material spread the girl's face into a hideous grimace.

All that was wiped away when I tugged the top-knot, formed by the stocking's toe, and pulled the stocking clear away.

The fakers were indebted to science for the chilled atmosphere. Marxa's manager had secretly uncorked a double flask containing liquid air, which lowered the temperature of the room while the medium was slipping the ropes and getting into her quick disguise.

But the exposure of Marxa was my own no-



As Dunninger Grabbed the "Spirit's" Top-knot, Her Robe Dropped Off and She Stood Unmasked as Marxa Herself, a Clever Acrobat and Contortionist as Well as a Faking Medium.

tion. They had left me with a long piece of rope without an opportunity to bind the medium. So I had hitched one end of the rope to the chair at the far end of the circle, and had carried the other end over to my own. Lying on the floor, the rope hadn't shown in the ruby light.

When the medium had hopped deep into the circle, I had drawn back in pretended horror. The rope had been pulled tight, tripping the fake wonder on its return dance to the cabinet, and Marxa had sprawled onto the floor.

In the cabinet we found loose ropes hanging from the arms and leg of the chair. She had simply slipped them, intending to wriggle back into them after she returned to the cabinet.

Of course, she would have put on her stocking and replaced the inner curtain where it belonged. I could have searched the premises without finding anyone hiding, and not one person in a thousand would have imagined that the missing creature had been Marxa.

This "materialization" in its lurid setting gave further evidence of how easy it is for the ordinary sitters at a seance to exaggerate what happens there. No wonder they make absurd statements and wild claims for such "phenomena" that may be paraded before their eyes.

How far the Martian racket has advanced was shown when a group of financiers recently asked my advice about an interplanetary motor an inventor had designed under what he called instructions from a spirit medium, who was supposed to be communing with the master minds living on the planet Mars. These men were very serious in their request for information on the subject.

"It's just a new twist," I told them. "In the Victorian period, mediums harped on a place they called the Summerland. After World War I they began claiming that departed spirits dwelt in astral planes, with multitudes living in a materialized state about five miles above the earth."

"But, Dunninger," objected one listener, "that couldn't be. The new stratoliners would be continually bumping into cloud banks full of spirits."

"Don't think the fakers overlooked that angle," I replied. "As soon as science talked about airplanes riding through the stratosphere, they shifted their spirit lands to places like Mars, which were too remote to be reached."

I then told how spook fakers had seized upon the work of Professor Theodore Flournoy, a French scientist who had studied the trance utterances of a clairvoyant named Helene Smith.

She talked in a language supposed to be Martian, describing the landscapes of that planet. Her excursions into the subconscious proved to be helpful to fake mediums in many ways.

For many years mediums have been producing varying forms of spirit hands and feet. One of them called her trick "Hands Across the Sea of Death."

Beside her chair were placed a bucket of cold water and a bucket of melted paraffin.

The materializing spirits were to dip their hands in the paraffin and then in the cold water in order to harden the paraffin. On their departure from the seance room they were to leave behind, for members of the circle to see, their paraffin hand impressions. Some hand impression was always found when the lights went on.

"Here's my proof," the medium exalted to her wondering circle, "that I have called upon the spirits and they have answered me."

Finally, it was discovered that she used special rubber gloves, the surfaces of which were prepared in advance with lines and ridges to reproduce in the paraffin the palm lines and other features of an actual hand.

Exposure, however, did not scotch this trick. Indeed, it was later expanded to meet the test of scientific investigators, who asked to be shown a paraffin mold of a spirit's clenched fist.

The mediums responded by filling a rubber glove with water, shaping it to a fist and dipping it in the paraffin. The water was then poured from the glove which was easily drawn



Bound as Securely as Mediums Are Supposed to Be, Dunninger Can Free Himself in the Dark, and Startle a Sucker With a "Spirit Hand" on a Stick.

out empty, leaving the wax form intact.

Only recently, this hokum has been stepped-up in connection with "ectoplasm," the rubbery substance that is so often produced during seances.

You've probably heard of the gas-forming chemicals used for the automatic inflation of rubber boats, science's "new" contribution toward rescuing pilots who crash in the sea, and crews of torpedoed ships.

If you think this invention is really new, you're wrong. For years fake mediums kept it a closely guarded secret in the production of what they termed ectoplasmic shapes.

Hands and heads were fashioned out of rubber, and in them were concealed a chemical powder with a tiny vial of special acid. When the vial was broken the united chemicals inflated the fantastic human-like shapes.

My monied friends admitted that their medium had communed with celestial characters, but the Mars Motor was a fact, they declared. So we went to a laboratory and found the inventor demonstrating the model from which he hoped to build a full-sized machine.

The machine was an intricate collection of cogs, sprockets and pistons standing on a square sheet of glass, mounted on four glass legs on a large wooden base. The whole thing was covered with a removable glass case. This shiny mechanism was smoothly operating an upright rod from which metal spheres covered a sweeping circle at an angle of 45 degrees.

Under the watchful eyes of private detectives working a 24-hour shift, the machine had been running for a month. According to the inventor, it was getting its

power straight from Mars, thanks to a so-called interplanetary projector.

After studying the contraption, I asked for 24 hours in which to give my opinion. Meanwhile, I made certain arrangements which I felt sure would expose the hoax. When we returned to close the deal, the machine was still running and the medium was in a trance, translating messages from the Martian tongue.

The inventor beamed when one financier drew out his check book, but at that crucial moment I pointed to the machine and it suddenly stopped, to the amazement of all except myself. My cue was simply an electric light in the hallway; when it went off, I knew the machine would stop when I made my gesture.

I had arranged with the electric company to cut off the current in that neighborhood, and the interplanetary motor had failed when the local lighting system stopped functioning.

The fakers reluctantly disclosed the trick mechanism, when we promised not to prosecute. One of the glass legs of the stand was hollow. Inside it was a glass rod that ran down into the platform where it was revolved by a small electric motor. The rod was geared to the visible machinery, providing the motive power.

(In his next article Mr. Dunninger will explain the postwar frauds he says will arrive with the wave of spiritism that is already rising.)